



Seattle Fire Fighters Union, Local 27 IAFF, AFL-CIO

517 Second Avenue West, Seattle, WA 98119 • (206) 285-1271 or (800) 423-4224

July 18, 2019

Councilmember Gonzalez
Councilmember Herbold
Councilmember Mosqueda
600 Fourth Ave, 2nd Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Councilmembers,

Seattle Fire Fighters Union, IAFF Local 27 is writing in regard to your letter dated July 15, 2019 regarding your perspective on aspects of the Seattle Police Officers' Guild (SPOG) Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) and your suggestions based on a recent Court Order set forth by Judge James Robart.

The members of Local 27 want to make it perfectly clear that we strongly disagree with any unilateral attempts to reopen this agreement which was bargained in good faith over the course of several years and signed by the Mayor and Seattle City Council. Any and all efforts to put undue pressure on SPOG to reopen this agreement are inappropriate. The members of SPOG have the right to determine, on their own terms, what course of action they want to pursue.

Local 27 unquestionably supports police accountability and recognizes the successful efforts of the City and SPOG to reach full compliance with the 2012 consent decree with the Department of Justice. However, Local 27 is also writing today because we have concerns that some members of the Seattle City Council appear to be trying to negotiate this Collective Bargaining Agreement in public. This sets a bad precedent that could negatively impact the employees that we represent. The City and SPOG have completed negotiations and the City Council signed and ratified the current CBA. The continued public effort to exert pressure on this bargaining unit to renegotiate this agreement is troubling. Local 27 is concerned with the fact that you have chosen to write a letter to the Mayor, and shared it with the media, stating that if SPOG declines to reopen the CBA, it is your belief that the City should disclose this to the Court and use it as an example of SPOG not acting in good faith. We would hope that under the collective bargaining process, when a deal is reached and agreed to by both parties, that should be the end of negotiations.

Your letter also states that, "These findings, furthermore, can be read to justify the City's position to, at a minimum, propose to SPOG that we mutually take advantage of the commonly used and legally

www.iaff27.com • email: info@iaff27org • fax: (206) 285-9479

Kenny Stuart, President

Jeff Miller, Vice President • Darren Schulberg, Vice President

Dennis Karl, Treasurer • Tyson DePoe, Executive Secretary

Directors: Tony Savelli • Ryan Ellis • Liam Roney • Rich Milligan

available tool of a "re-opener" on the narrow issue of reforming the labor arbitration process." Local 27 is alarmed that City Council members would be proposing to "reform" the labor arbitration process. Arbitration is a time-tested and highly valued process to resolve disputes by an impartial third party that Local 27 considers indispensable to labor relations. Labor arbitrators are impartial experts who are more knowledgeable about the concepts of just cause, industrial due process and the proper interpretation of collective bargaining agreements than is the case with any other group of legal scholars. The last 80 years of labor history has firmly established the importance to public employees of having the right to appeal the decisions that are made by management to impartial outside experts, and that same labor history has also firmly established that labor arbitrators are the best resource for both labor and management to utilize in order to obtain speedy, fair and cost-effective resolutions to their disputes.

As workers, police officers have the same right to be provided with industrial due process and to be disciplined only for just cause as is the case with fire fighters and other City employees. Determinations in that regard should be made by the most appropriate decision-makers, which includes labor arbitrators. Police officers don't lose those worker rights when they put on a badge. That is why, even though at the moment your letter is only directed at police officers, Local 27 considers this letter to be an incursion on the collective bargaining rights of Local 27 members, and indeed, all City employees. Eliminating or reducing the arbitration rights of police officers is a step towards "right to work" for police officers, and thus for fire fighters as well.

These concerns prompt us to respond in order to protect the collective bargaining process and the rights that our state laws provide to fire fighters and all public employees. As fellow public safety employees and union workers we proudly stand with our brothers and sisters at SPOG little as well as all Seattle City Employees who make Seattle function and provide essential city services each and every day in our communities. Bargaining in good faith by both parties is crucial to the labor-management relationship, and arbitration is a fundamental component of dispute resolution. We want to ensure that these elements remain a priority of our city council members.

Respectfully,



Kenny Stuart
President
Seattle Fire Fighters Union
IAFF Local 27
Lieutenant, Ladder 8 Seattle Fire Department

CC: Councilmember Harrell
Councilmember Bagshaw
Councilmember Juarez
Councilmember O'Brien
Councilmember Pacheco
Councilmember Sawant

